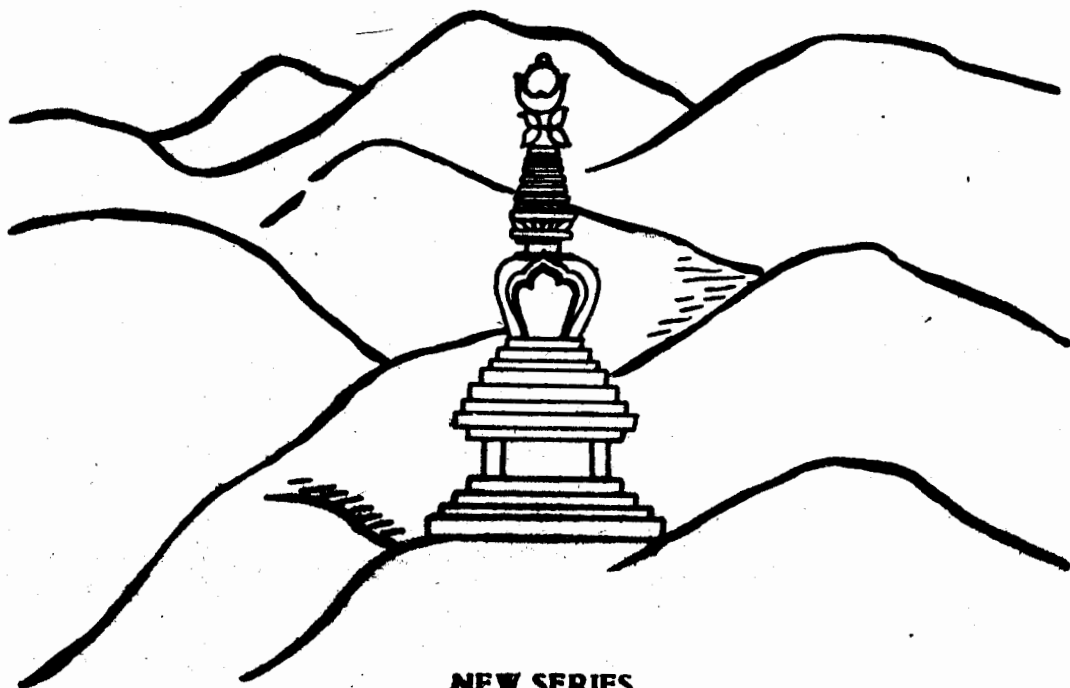


# Bulletin of Tibetology



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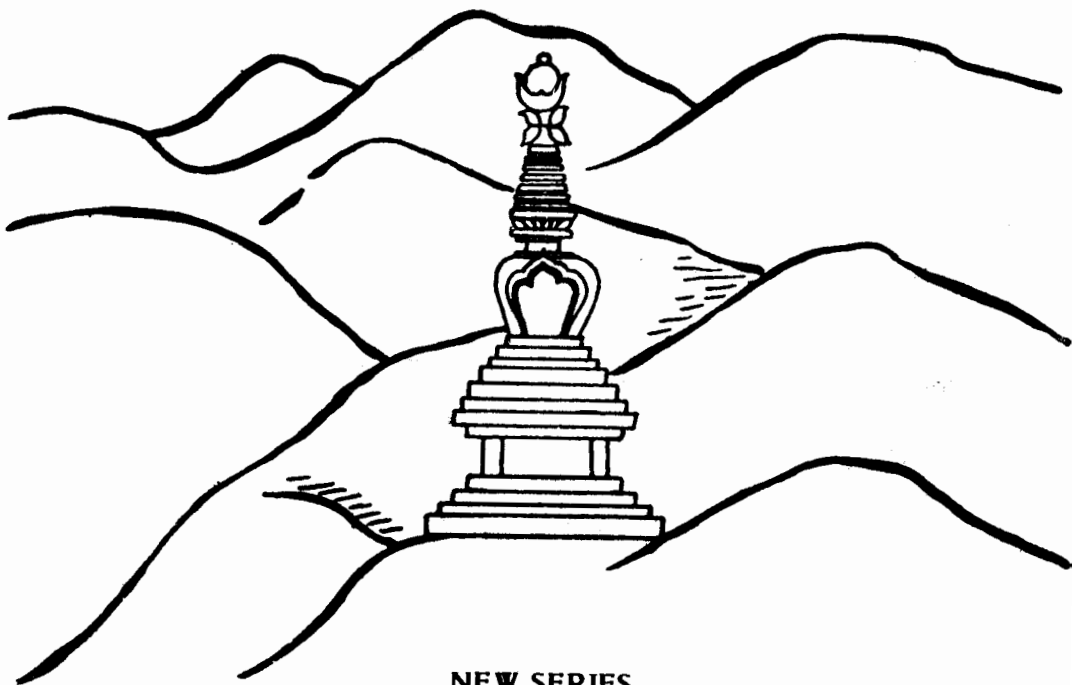
**SIKKIM RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY  
GANGTOK, INDIA**

The Bulletin of Tibetology seeks to serve the specialist as well as the general reader with an interest in this field of study. The motif portraying the Stupa on the mountains suggests the dimensions of the field-

*EDITORS*

NIRMAL C. SINHA  
JAMPAL K RECHUNG

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## WHAT CONSTITUTES THE IMPORTANCE OF ATISA?

- Nirmal C. Sinha

### I

The above question is from a young Tibetologist, Helmut Eimer. Eimer has made wide study of Tibetan literary sources, and in my knowledge he is the only non-Tibetan scholar to have probed deep into the life and works of Srijnana Dipankara Atisa (982-1054). In 1982-83 millenary of Atisa was celebrated in India. The scholarly or academic output of these celebrations however did not go much beyond what the Indian pioneer Sarat Chandra Das (1849-1917) wrote. Indian scholars celebrating ATISA SAHASRA VARSHIKI were not even aware of many Tibetan sources come to light after Sarat Das, and all our seminars and talks boiled down to the old, already known, conclusion that Atisa was the great Pandita who brought learning and light to Tibet when Dharma was in danger there. The ATISA SAHASRA VARSHIKI did not impress the interested scholars even in India.

Helmut Eimer does not refer to the muddle among Indian celebrators but has written a critical article on "Life and Activities of Atisa Dipankara Srijnana" in Journal of the Asiatic Society, Vol XXVII No. 4 (Calcutta 1985). Eimer frames the question "What constitutes the importance of Atisa?" in this article. With my limited acquaintance of Tibetan literary sources, a fair knowledge of Tibetan oral tradition and good on-the-spot knowledge acquired in Central Tibet in 1955-6, I had posed nearly twenty years ago the same question in Bengal Past & Present: Diamond Jubilee Number (Calcutta 1967). As my question did not attract any serious notice in our country at the moment and later, I take the liberty of reproducing below the relevant portions of my article (1967).

### II

"A decade ago the present writer had visited the temples and monasteries of Central Tibet in the company of some Ladakhi Lamas. The writer did not, as he still does not, suffer from the complex called Greater India and was

not particular in tracing the Indic origins of the objects noticed. An event from this itinerary constitutes a historic experience for this writer, a student of history. This happened in the first month of Tibetan year.

"Besides being the time for new garments, luxury dishes and merriments for all, the first month is a special celebration for the Yellow Sect (dge-lugs-pa, pronounced Gelugpa). The Yellow Sect originating with Tsong-kha-pa (1357-1417), a great Lama from Kokonor region, captured political power in Central Tibet in the sixteenth century and by the middle of the seventeenth century made their hierarch, the Dalai Lama, the undisputed sovereign of Tibet. Though in actual administration lay element (members of ancient royal/feudal houses and the like) was taken into power and in fact at every level of administration a monk-official and a lay-official worked together, the ruling Lamas at the top maintained that the power belonged to the Sangha (dge-dun, pr. Gedun).

"Tsong-kha-pa, the founder of the Yellow Sect, had instituted a special prayer for the new year month. This prayer (smon-lam, pr. Monlam) was to invoke the advent of the Buddha Maitreya. The Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1692) enlarged the Prayer to the form in practice till the Flight of the Fourteenth (1959).

"During the month of Monlam the entire administration of the metropolis, that is, Lhasa, was taken over by the Lamas from the three monasteries around Lhasa. These monasteries had captured political power in the sixteenth century and the exclusive Lama administration of the metropolis was a token of the residuary powers or ultimate sovereignty of the Sangha.

"In the Monlam month no Lama high or low was to bow to a layman, particularly a stranger. Another protocol proscribed riding on the road around the Cathedral (Jo-khang = Skt. Bhattarakagriha) during the Monlam as the Dalai Lama usually resided in the Cathedral at the time. Horse as an engine of power first emerged in Inner Asia, and appropriately riding around the seat of the Imperium came to be banned during the period.

"A few days before the commencement of the New Year, the writer had left Lhasa to visit Gan-den (dgah-Idan = Skt. Tushita), one of the three monasteries and the one



with the mausoleum of Tsong-kha-pa. When he returned the New Year had set in and the special rules of the road were effective. Though his Ladakhi companions affirmed that a visitor from India - Phag-yul (hphags-yul) or Aryabhumi - would be permitted riding because at the moment the Dalai Lama was not inside the Cathedral, the writer dismounted on reaching the ring. Some Lamas noticed this and were delighted at the observance of propriety.

"One Lama asked the writer whether he was also a Ladakhi. On answering in the negative he wanted to know the exact place - the city - from where the writer hailed. The writer said "Kata" (Kata or Kalikata is Tibetan for Calcutta). The inquisitive Lama burst out "Kata Kalikata. That means Vangala". He collected quite a few of his friends and bowed thrice (Namaskar in Indian fashion) and said "Look, this man is come from Vangala from where Jo-Atisa (Prabhū Atisa) came to Tibet". Then followed this dialogue.

Lama : Are you a Buddhist?

Writer : No.

Lama : Then you will not know Jo-Atisa.

Writer : I do know his name.

Lama : How is that for a non-Buddhist?

Writer : In Vangala many know him and know his full name Dipankara Srijnana Atisa. His name lives as the mark of intellect.

Lama : I do not fully accept your word. Is the name current today in your country?

Writer : Yes, I have my son named Atisa.

Lama : I am surprised. I am surprised.

"The Lama's peroration still rings in the ears of the writer. "Today is a most auspicious day for me. I come from Mongolia and this man comes from Vangala. I have taken nearly two years to reach Lhasa. I arrived only this morning a few hours ago to participate in Monlam and what a happy augury that I meet a native of the land of Jo-Atisa. Jo-Atisa came to preach the correct Doctrine nine hundred years ago and his preachings spread from Tibet into Mongolia. Friends, join me in a salutation to this man from the south. We salute the land of Jo-Atisa". The Lama bowed thrice again and departed.

"This strange conduct of a Lama during the Monlam

was an inscrutable sight to the non-Buddhist traders on the street. Monlam is also the season when Musulman merchants from India (Ladakh) and Turkestan (Sinkiang) along with the Tibetans and Newars throng the streets of Lhasa. Most confounded were the Chinese, the civilians in blue as well as the soldiers in khaki.

"Though not a devotee of the fetish of Greater India, this writer quite naturally felt a gratification on being honoured as a compatriot of Atisa. He, however, felt more interested to know the place of Atisa in the history of Inner Asia, Tibet and Mongolia. Atisa (b. 982) came to Tibet in 1042 and passed away in 1054 near Lhasa".

### III

Ten years later I visited the Baikals and was more surprised to note that the Buriats esteemed Adisa Dibangkara (Atisa Dipankara) as second only to Gautama Buddha. I was told that the Buriats shared such sentiment with the Mongols in general. All Mongols reportedly admitted the greatness of Nagarjuna as the authentic exponent of Buddha's Transcendental Teachings and that of Tsong Khapa as the Teacher of the Dharma. The tradition among the Mongols, as I could understand, was that though Atisa indeed never travelled beyond Central Tibet his teachings in their purest form reached the Mongols through Tsong Khapa and his disciples.

Atisa had visited Tibet and worked there till his death. Atisa had indeed consolidated Dharma in Tibet and the great renaissance was the outcome of Atisa's work in Tibet. Atisa's name as a household word in Tibet is no puzzle for anyone, a Buddhist believer or a modern scholar. But why and how Atisa became a prized figure in the north, in Mongolia or Siberia? Clearly Atisa left a legacy not for Tibet only but for all Mahayana or Northern Buddhist peoples.

This important question has not however interested scholars and intellectuals in the land of Atisa's birth. The Atisa-Sahasra-Varshiki (millenary) was celebrated in India in 1982-83. The consensus among Indian scholars and intellectuals was that Atisa was a great son of India and that nothing much about Atisa can be found from records in India. There was however much noise about the precise

spot where Atisa was born. Was Atisa a Bengali or a Bihari in modern sense of the terms? I would contend that we in India -- Bengalis, Biharis or others -- need not shout to claim Atisa as our compatriot. Atisa is indeed a lost figure of Indian history while he is a live tradition of Asian history.

I have not much claims to scholarship yet as one with nearly 30 years close associations with Northern Buddhists I dare record my observations on Atisa's role in Inner Asian history. I would make some preliminary remarks before I offer my observations. It is a sad fact that after Sarat Chandra Das and Rahul Sankrityayan not much worthy work on Tibet has been done in India, that is, by Indian scholars. Indian scholarship regarding Tibet is a gloss of patriotic verbiage to conceal our poor knowledge of the subject. The Western scholars, on the otherhand, have delved deep into the literary and archaeological data available and have made original and outstanding contributions. I owe much of my knowledge about Tibet to several Western scholars as well as to Rahul Sankrityayan and a large number of Lamas and scholars of Tibet and Mongolia. I am however constrained to submit that Western scholars in general, barring a few like Hugh Richardson, have misunderstood or misinterpreted certain facts and features of the Northern Buddhist countries.

A point to illustrate would be the Western view about the origin and development of the Incarnations and Incarnate Rulers in Tibet and later Mongolia. Despite considerable positive data in Buddhist and pre-Buddhist Brahmanical literature, there is a notion among Western scholars that the institution of Incarnations commenced in Tibet under the auspices of the royal patrons of Dharma. For a brief authoritative account of the concept of Nirmanakaya (Sprulsku/Tulku) in Sankhya, Yoga and even Rig Veda, Western scholars should read Gopinath Kaviraj in the Sarasvati Bhavan Studies (Sanskrit College, Benaras) or Aspects of Indian Thought (University of Burdwan). If a great lot of Indic imagery and idiom migrated to the Trans-Himalayas along with Akshara and Dharma, the concept of Nirmanakaya was undoubtedly an important import.

The inventor of the script, Thonmi Sambhota was apotheosized as the incarnation of Manjusri while Songtsen

Gampo as that of Avalokitesvara. Later tradition dated before Atisa's arrival in Tibet, recognised Lha Tho Thori, the ancestor of Song-tsen Gampo, as an incarnation of Samantabhadra in commemoration of the event that the first Buddhist book, Karandvyuha, came in Lha Tho Thori's reign. Likewise, Lhalung Palgyi Dorje, who killed the apostate king Langdarma (c. 845), was apotheosized as an incarnation of Vajrapani. A monk resorting to murder and regicide to protect the Dharma was no doubt worthy of veneration as Vajrapani. The act of regicide by a monk anticipated by centuries the role of Lama as Dharmapala (Chos-skyong/Chokiyong) or Dharmaraja (Chos-rgyal/Chogyal).

#### IV

The regicide however could not prevent the decline of Dharma. Two centuries later Srijnana Dipankara, celebrated as Jo Atisa in Tibet, arrived in Western Tibet in pursuance of repeated invitations and later settled and propagated in Central Tibet. The Dharma was in decline and only a Sthavira cum Pandita like Atisa could fully retrieve the lost position and even usher in a period of renaissance. In regenerating and rebuilding the Sangha, Atisa enjoined stern discipline for the monks and, though himself old and come from warm plains, he refused any comforts which he considered to be luxury. Atisa's disciples (the Kadampa monks) and their successors (the Gelugpa monks) were renowned for their austere living and naturally commanded respect from all people. A Guru (Blama/Lama) or a Nirmanakaya (Sprul-sku/Tulku) would no longer be just an object of ritualistic veneration but a protector par excellence (Skyab-mgon/Kyam-gon) for the commonman when the remnants of monarchy or the feudal lords failed in their duties.

Atisa's experience in Suvarnadvipa must have inspired him to strive for a Sangha as the leading force in the land and for a Sangharaja as the leader of the people. The institutions of Lama and Tulku were thus handy. Atisa recalled the old Indian adage -- "The Guru is the Buddha : the Guru is the Dharma : the Guru is the Sangha" and confirmed the refuge formula, popular in Tibet -- "I take refuge in the Lama (Guru) : I take refuge in the Sangye (Buddha): I take refuge in the Chos (Dharma) : I take refuge in the Gedun (Sangha)". Later this refuge in the Four became

universal from the Himalayas to the Altai Karakorams. The concept of Tulku (Nirmanakaya) was further sanctified by Atisa. He not only confirmed the recognition of Songtsen Gampo as incarnation of Avalokitesvara but recognised his disciple Domton (hBrom-ston) also as in the same spiritual lineage. Atisa, according to Kadampa and Gelugpa sources, even prophesied that centuries later the lineage of Domton would produce in succession the incarnations of Avalokitesvara. The hierarchs of the Gelugpa Sect, later called Dalai Lamas by the Mongols, are the incarnations in fulfilment of Atisa's prophecy. An epithet of Avalokitesvara is Sangharatna, and who could be a better Sangharaja for the Land of Snow than the incarnation of Avalokitesvara.

Fifty years after Atisa passed away, the Sakya hierarch Sa-chen Kunga Nyingpo (1092 - 1158) was found to be incarnation of Avalokitesvara. The first Karmapa hierarch Dusum Khenpa (1110-1193) was the next find. The Karmapa lineage was claimed as the lineage of Avalokitesvara; later this claim was contested by the Gelugpa Sect. The Gelugpa won the battle, when all the four main sects (Nyingma, Sakya, Kargyu and Gelug) accepted the Gelug hierarch, the Dalai Lama, as the paramount incarnation for all Nangpa (Buddhist). Various theories have been propounded by Western scholars to account for the victory of the Gelug hierarch. This is not the occasion to discuss that question.

## V

In ancient India, as in Tibet later, the legacy or heritage of a saint would be best preserved or continued by saintly disciples and the successive abbots or hierarchs were to be celibate. So the lineage was known as spiritual lineage. Such lineage could be in one or more pitha/ashrama. The most famous such lineage surviving to our days is the spiritual lineage of Sankaracharya in four different seats in four directions of the country. In Buddhist Tibet also we have records of one or more incarnations of the same deity or saint.

Western scholars have taken great pains to find better English equivalents for the terms "spiritual" and "incarnation". For the former terms like "metaphysical" and "non-biological" have been coined and for the latter terms like "re-incarnation" have been used. I would stick to the old

usage "spiritual" and "incarnation" and simply submit that with all their proficiency in Tibetan language the Western scholars ignore or lack the context of Sanskrit originals.

It was the spiritual lineage represented by the Kadampa and later the Gelugpa hierarchs who preserved and continued the legacy of Atisa. This legacy stood for the rights of the Sangha and the authority of the Sangharaja.

It may be noted that from the very beginning in China there was an open confrontation between Buddhism and Confucianism; and except during the Tang regime, Buddhism had all through a precarious existence in China. As an accident of history, Buddhism had made its first hold in Tibet while the Tang dynasty was ruling in China; even Chinese princesses are known to have brought to their Tibetan consorts Buddha images.

Nevertheless the confrontation between Buddhism and Confucianism was continued in Tibet, and eventually Buddhism became the identity mark for the barbarian Bod-pa visavis the civilised Han. When a "barbarian" or "conqueror" dynasty like the Mongol or the Manchu ruled China, the close relationship between the Grand Lamas of Tibet and the Emperors of China was a matter of the common Dharma. The Lama was the highly honoured Priest/Teacher and the Emperor was the highly prized patron. Tibetans did not become "civilized" and Tibet continued as a "barbarian" country. That is to say, Tibet did not become during the regimes of "barbarian" emperors "Tibet Region of China". Besides there was no question of Mongols becoming submissive or civilized either.

Sino-ophile scholars roundly describe the Manchu emperor as the suzerain, if not sovereign, over Tibet and Mongolia. True facts are not to be found in the Chinese Annals which as a rule omit events of misdemeanour or rebellion in Tibet or Mongolia. The fact of the matter is that the Great Fifth (Dalai Lama V) was prevailed upon by his imperial patron to keep the Mongols under control and within their boundaries. The Mongols under the advice of the Dalai's second -- the Hambo lama -- agreed to keep peace if they were left alone. It is interesting to note that while the so-called Tribute Missions from Tibet were sometimes too frequent and had to be banned by the Confucian diplo-

mats, such Missions from Mongolia were not even very regular.

The great economic gain for the Mission bearers was not a good incentive for the Mongol traders who retained their ancient spirit of war and freedom. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Mongols, Kalmuks and Buriats chalked out new trade channels in Tibet (and through to India) and in Turkestan (and through to Russia and Poland).

Earlier, that is, previous to Dalai Lama Manchu alliance, sword was the instrument for freedom in Tibet and more so in Mongolia. Now Dharma was the symbol of national identity or independence. The great merit of Gelugpa ascendancy was that the barbarians had a new consciousness of being civilized and superior, and even the most illiterate or superstitious could notice material and temporal power in the religion. For such illiterate or superstitious, the teachings of Buddha, Nagarjuna and Padmasambhava found their logical fulfilment in Kadam Phachos, Kadam Bhuchos and the trail of tracts and treatises.

Legacy of Dharma propounded by Gautama Buddha and expounded by Atisa, may be summed thus. One who takes refuge in the Three Jewels does not and cannot owe higher allegiance to any mundane superior. In China, a Buddhist was often accused as being disrespectful or insubordinate to the Son of Heaven on the Dragon Throne. In India, the Buddha (after Nirvana) and the Dharma were transcendental and intangible objects; the Sangha was immanent and tangible and refuge in the Sangha evoked spontaneous devotion and faith. The Sangha under favourable circumstances could be the sole refuge in matters spiritual as well as temporal. The Sangha had a mission from the Master, "for the profit of the many, for the bliss of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the profit, the bliss of devas and mankind". It was the Sangha which under favourable auspices, could take the Dharma abroad and build permanent and glorious home for the Dharma spread from the sunny south to the cold north. In the new home the Sangharaja would be the Refuge or Protector par excellence and would thus not bow to any temporal power. Thus for Tibet and Mongolia, submission to any external temporal power, even if that be the Son of Heaven, would be blasphemy as well as treason. It was this non-reli-

gious or non-spiritual consequence of the teachings of Atisa's followers which had a popularity of its own for the Tibetans as well as the Mongols when the Manchu empire was at its apogee and the first British envoy to China was dismissed as a Red Barbarian.

Gautama Buddha and Dipankara Atisa are prized figures in Tibet and Mongolia for moral as well as material reasons no doubt.

## VI

I have written this article to draw the notice of Indian elite and to divert the attention of Indian scholars to a truly viable subject for research. Helmut Eimer is thirty years junior to me in age but considerably senior to me in scholarship. I shall be the last to find fault with Eimer's Tibetan scholarship.

I however seek Helmut Eimer's indulgence to say a few words on proper reading and proper review of Tibetan literary sources and a millenium old tradition. He has cited a number of German authorities on science of history and historiography as guides for correctly presenting Tibetan history, history of the sects (Kadampa and Gelugpa) and lives of saints and scholars as found in Tibetan literary sources. I do not read German but am well aware of the inhibitions of Western scholars regarding historical source materials of Eastern countries. I began my career as a student of history, particularly modern history, and submit the following comments about history, eastern and western.

Persistent century old tradition, even if not recorded in paper on stone, cannot be totally rejected. Theodore Mommsen, the first Nobel Laureate in literature, wrote his monumental book on Rome based on innumerable sources in paper and stone. Mommsen's main theme, namely, idolization of the state was not always based on epigraphic or literary sources. Later researches found much to criticise Mommsen. For instance Brutus in later research was apotheosized as the champion of liberty. But the age old Roman veneration for paramount position of the state remains a firm fact of history.

In Britain historians of old, down to the end of last century, adored Magna Carta (1215) as the bedrock of



"rule of law" and "liberty of subject". Later historians like Tout and Pollard found the Magna Carta as a mere charter of rights of the barons visavis the king. It was found to be 'a charter of liberties' for vested classes and not 'a charter of liberty' for the people. But Magna Carta remains a Bible with the common man and the elite in Britain as the document was the first contract between a king and his subjects to define and limit the authority of the king. It was not blind veneration for a totem when during the German air invasion of Britain, British authorities decided to deposit the document, Magna Carta, in the vaults of the United States Congress.

A great figure of Indian history - I should say of universal history - is Asoka Maurya. Indian literary sources had very little to say about Asoka though literary sources of Sri Lanka, Tibet, and Mongolia kept alive the name Asoka. Even after the Asokan edicts came to be read by European scholars like Prinsep and Hultzsch, there was great reluctance in Europe to admit that the Maurya Empire stretched beyond Hindukush to Afghanistan, though ancient Greek writers bore testimony. It was in 1956 that the Kandahar Edict was discovered and deciphered. Western scholarship now admits that the oral tradition of India or Tibet was no myth.

Tibetan literary texts and oral traditions no doubt contain many legends and apocryphal narratives but display no pompous claims as in Chinese Annals, e.g. kings of West sent Tributes to the Son of Heaven. It took quite long time for modern Western scholars to realize that Tibetan Tributes, recorded in Chinese Annals, did not render Tibet a domain of the Celestial Empire. Western scholars had greater shock to discover that in pre-Buddhist time Tibetan kings carried their victorious arms to the heart of China, Sian (Chang-an). The Tibetan inroads and such uncomfortable events are blacked out in Chinese Annals. It will therefore be waste of time to look for any confirmation or corroboration about the rise to temporal power of the Tibetan and Mongol hierarchs in Chinese Annals.

That story has to be found in Tibetan texts, not all discovered so far nor much may be expected three decades after Tibet became Tibet Region of China. Even then the trail of tracts and treatises, following KADAM PHACHO

and KADAM BHUCHO, would in my contention, confirm the Gelugpa tradition of Tibet and Mongolia that Dipankara Atisa's spiritual child was the Lama Protector, Kyamgon Chenpo. Many of my Lama teachers and Lama students, including Sakya and Kargyu, read and speak English. I have discussed with them the modern disciplines, history and historiography. These Lamas are optimistic like me that as in the past so in the present, history will bear out that Atisa was a great scholar and a great monk but was greater as a statesman with the vision of a prophet.

## VII

Celebrators in India were confident in their sole conclusion that Dipankara Atisa was the greatest of Indian monk scholars visiting Tibet. The older sects, particularly Nyingma, would not place Atisa above Guru Padmasambhava (+750+) while all sects, including Gelugpa, would claim Santarakshita, the celebrated contemporary of Padmasambhava, as the greatest scholar from India. All the sects, including Nyingma, adore Jowo Atisa as the monk-statesman who came to the rescue of Dharma in Tibet (1042) and preached there till he passed away (1054). For nine centuries since his Nirvana, Jowo Atisa has remained the embodiment of Tibet's identity.

# THE TIBETAN TRADITION OF GEOGRAPHY

—TURRELL V. WYLIE

Geography, as a scientific description of the physical world, did not develop in Tibet in a manner analogous to that of western civilizations. Physical geography with its study of the earth's surface, climate, and the distribution of flora and fauna did not emerge as a branch of learning. Historically speaking, only two traditions evolved: political geography and religious geography. The commonly used term, "political geography" requires no special clarification here, but the concept of "religious geography", which is as familiar to Tibetans as it is strange to foreigners, needs some explanations. The term "religious geography" is used in this article to refer to that corpus of Tibetan literature which describes the geographic location and the religious history of sacred places and things without reference to the physical features of the region or its flora and fauna.

Since religious geography is a characteristic of the Tibetan tradition and is substantiated by various autochthonous monographic studies, it will be discussed first in this article. The tradition of political geography, which reflects the historical evolution of the Tibetan state, is not found in such monographic studies and must be reconstructed from diverse data found in unrelated textual materials. In view of the fragmented and often hypothetical nature of the "political geography" tradition, it will be discussed last in this article.

## RELIGIOUS GEOGRAPHY

There are various examples of Tibetan literature which may be grouped together and classified as religious geographic literature. These texts are intended primarily to describe the geographical location and religious history of pilgrimage places, sacred objects, and the hermitages of former Buddhist holy men. They are devoid of specific information on physical geography *per se* and are better understood when thought of as *guide-books* for pilgrims visiting unfamiliar places and things.

The corpus of this geographic literature may be divided, for the sake of convenience and discussion in this article, into the following general types:

Dkar-chag <sup>1</sup>	( "Register" )
Gnas-bshad	( "Guide-book" )
Lam-yig	( "Passport" )
Go-la'i kha-byang	( "Global-description" )

The first type, the "register", is limited to the description of a single pilgrimage place with an account of the various sacred objects to be found there.<sup>2</sup> A lengthy example of this type is the *Lha-ldan sprul-pa'i gtsug-lag khang-gi dkar-chag shel-dkar me-long* ("The bright mirror register of the emanated temple of Lha-ldan [=Lhasa] ") by the V Dalai Lama Blo-bzang rgya-mtsho (1617-1682). This register is a detailed account of the sacred objects found in the Jo-khang temple in Lhasa and comprises the entire volume *Dza* of the V Dalai Lama's collected writings (gsung-'bum).<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to this detailed register by a famous author, there are many short registers by anonymous authors. An example of this type is the *Bal-yul mchod-rten 'Phags-pa shing-kun dang de'i gnas-gzhan-rnams-kyi-dkar-chag* ("Register of the Nepalese stupa 'Phags-pa shing-kun [=Svayambhunath] and other pilgrimage places"). This text is a xylograph of only ten folios and is printed in the Sgrol-ma'i lha-khang, a temple near the Svayambhunath stupa itself. No author is mentioned in its colophon.<sup>4</sup>

The second type, the "guide-book", describes more than one pilgrimage place and offers terse directions how to travel between them. A very short example of such a guide-book is the *Bal-yul gnas-yig*, a xylograph of only eleven folios, which lists the various significant pilgrimage places one encounters when traveling from India northward to, and including, the Kathmandu valley.

Perhaps the most distinguished and detailed guide-book found in religious geographic literature is the *Dbus-gtsang-gi gnas-rten rags-rim-gyi mtshan-byang mdor-bsdus dad-pa'i sa-bon* ("Short summary of the pure names of some of the holy places and images of Dbus and Gtsang; called the Seed of Faith") by 'Jam-dbyangs mkhyen-brtse dbang-po kun-dga' bstan-pa'i rgyal-mtshan (1820-1892).<sup>5</sup> This guide-book in twenty-nine folios gives directions to pilgrims how to travel from one to another of the more famous pilgrimage places in the central Tibetan provinces of Dbus and Gtsang. It is an excellent source of proper orthography of place names as well as a survey of the significant monasteries, temples, images, and hermitages together with a brief historical account of them. This valuable guide-book like the others of the "religious geographic type" is devoid of special information on flora, fauna and topography.

The third type, the "passport", as indicated by the term implies a guide-book for pilgrims whose pilgrimage involves

travel between two or more countries. The most famous example of the passport type of geographical text is the *Shambha-la'i lam-yig* ("Passport to Shambhala") by the III Panchen Lama Blo-bzang dpal-ldan ye-shes (1738-1780).<sup>6</sup> This passport-type of guide-book involves international travel for it describes the way in which one must proceed in order to travel to the paradise of Shambhala. Shambhala is the realm ruled by the Kulika kings, who have preserved the teachings of the *Dus-kyi 'khor-lo rgyud* (Kalacakra-tantra) and who will eventually destroy the heretics and a new age of Buddhism will begin.<sup>7</sup>

The last type, the "global-description", is unique and represented by a single text, the *'Dzam-gling chen-po'i rgyas-bshad snod-bcud kun-gsal me-long* ("The mirror which illuminates all inanimate and animate things and explains fully the Great World") by Bla-ma Btsan-po Simin-grol sprul-sku 'Jam-dpal chos-kyi bstan-'dzin 'phrin-las (1789-1838).<sup>8</sup> This comprehensive geography in 146 folios is a description of the known world and was compiled in 1820 by the Bla-ma Btsan-po during his residence in Peking, where he had access to European geographies as well as Russian and Chinese ones. His accounts of the western world, which were based on inadequate secondary sources, are interesting and at times amusing.<sup>9</sup> The chief value of his work is the section on Tibet (folios 58-81) which surveys the religious geography of Tibet from Stod Mnga'ris in the west, to Ru-bzhi of Dbus-Gtsang in the center, and to Khams and A-mdo in the east. This section is unique in Tibetan geographical literature because it is a "guide-book" to all regions of Tibet, not just one or two.

On the other hand, this "global-description" by Bla-ma Btsan-po should not be considered a true type within the Tibetan tradition of religious geography. Every chief monastery and temple has its own register (*dkar-chag*) and guide-books (*gnas-bshad*) are available for various regions of Tibet and bordering areas. The passport (*lam-yig*) type, although involving international pilgrimage particularly to a Buddhist paradise, is adequately substantiated in the geographic tradition; but the global-description (*go-la'i kha-byang*) is evidenced only by the text of the Bla-ma Btsan-po. Moreover, there is an inconsistency in the geographical writings of the Bla-ma Btsan-po, which indicates that he viewed Tibetan geography from the traditional "religious" function, but viewed the western world through the eyes of the foreign geographers

whose works he used. For example, his description of Tibetan topography is concerned exclusively with pilgrimage places, as seen in the following passage: "In the region southwest of there is Yar-lung. There are such things there as the three receptacles (rten-gsum) namely: the mchod-rten called Gung-thang-'bum-mo-che, Tshe-rgyal-'bum-pa, and Theg-chen-'bum-pa,....."<sup>10</sup>; but his description of the western hemisphere arrives at physical geography. Compare his passage: ".....[in South America].....due to the excessive warmth, there are many kinds of fruits and many kinds of crops (obtained) without plowing, such as *ma-kai* (maize). Since there are a great many birds, such as domesticated fowls which change color, and fish and game animals, the people of those countries always have a livelihood and so there is no poverty."<sup>11</sup> From this contrast between his "religious geography" for Tibet and "semi-physical geography" for foreign countries, it may be postulated that the Bla-ma Btsan-po, who was living in Peking at the time, had to rely upon *written* Tibetan geographical literature; all of which reflected the "religious" tradition of geographic description. Since the Bla-ma Btsan-po's monumental work is unique in Tibetan literature, it should perhaps not be considered a true type of geographical text, but rather an exceptional type.

## POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

As noted earlier, "political" geography—unlike "religious" geography—was not the subject of singular studies in Tibet and thus there are no available monographs on this type of geography; however, data relating to the political areas of Tibet are found in various and diverse sources which provide an insight into the Tibetan tradition of "political" geography.

For the sake of convenience, Tibetan political history may be divided into four major periods—(1) legendary, (2) dynastic, (3) hegemonic and (4) theocratic. The legendary period, as implied by the name, represents the pre-historical period characterized by fact, legend, and myth. There are no sources—indigenous or foreign—to shed light on Tibetan concepts of political areas prior to the development of a written script in the seventh century A.D.

### Dynastic Period (629-842)

The "dynastic" period began with the reign of Srong-btsan sgam-po (ascended 629—died 649) because it was during

his time that the nucleus of the Tibetan kingdom began to expand into a royal empire. The kingdom inherited by Srong-btsan sgam-po included the regions of Dwags-po, Rkōng-yul, Ngas-po and Rtsang-bod, as well as the country of Sum-pa, which had been subjugated in the time of his father.<sup>12</sup> The division of the kingdom in central Tibet into the "Four Banners" ( Ru-bzhi ) appeared early in the dynastic period and is attested by documents found at Tun-huang.<sup>13</sup> As the nucleus of royal power was expanded into an empire various regions were brought under Tibetan domination. The Yang-t'ung people in the northeast were subjugated first, then the 'A-zha, who occupied the area near Lake Kokonor. Next defeated were the Tang-hsiang, who lived to the east of the 'A-zha; which extended the Tibetan empire over the region known as A-mdo and brought it up to the frontier of T'ang China. Zhang-zhung, the region lying to the west of central Tibet, was subdued in the time of Srong btsan sgam-po as well.

The empire was expanded northwesterly into Li-yul (Khotan) and the "Four Garrisons of An-hsi", which controlled the area currently known as Chinese Turkestan, were captured during the reign of Khri Mang-slon mang-rtsan (ascended 650-died 676). Following the death of this king, Zhang-zhung revolted and its resubjugation eventually led to its incorporation into the Tibetan empire to such an extent that its own language and cultural identity died out.

Although the Tibetans lost control of the Chinese Turkestan region to the Chinese in 692, they retained domination over most of the other subjugated regions until the middle of the ninth century. That region, comprised of the areas known as Stod Mnga'-ris, Dbus, Gtsang, Khams, and A-mdo, was under Tibetan control for over 200 years resulting in the firm establishment of the Tibetans with their language and culture. This, then, was the origin and extent of the geographical area referred to in later times as "ethnic" Tibet in contrast to "political" Tibet.

### Hegemonic Period (842-1642)

The Tibetan empire collapsed in the middle of the ninth century for various reasons, not the least of which was the assassination of the anti-Buddhist king, Glang-dar-ma, in 842, which led to schisms in the royal lineage and subsequent fragmentation of the kingdom and loss of "political"

unity. Thus began a period of "hegemonic" rule that endured for centuries.

A nebulous form of political unity was restored in central Tibet in 1247, when Sa-skya Pandita Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan (1182-1251) was invested with authority over the Khri-skor bcu-gsum (Thirteen Myriarchies) by the Mongol Prince, Godan son of Ogodai Khan. It is to be noted that the Thirteen Myriarchies did not comprise all of "ethnic" Tibet; only the regions of Dbus, Gtsang and Yar-'brog. Sa-skya Pandita, as head of the Sa-skya-pa sect, became the first lama to rule central Tibet—in theory, if not in fact—and his investiture marked the beginning of that unique form of government found in Tibet where the secular authority is held by an ecclesiastic.

'Phags-pa (1235-1280), a nephew of Sa-skya Pandita, became the religious teacher of Qubilai Khan, who first invested 'Phags-pa with authority over the Thirteen Myriarchies and then over the Chol-kha Gsum (Three Provinces), namely: (1) Dbus-Gtsang, 2) Mdo-stod and (3) Mdo-smad. These last two provinces are the areas of Khams and A-mdo respectively; therefore, 'Phags-pa was invested with authority over "ethnic" Tibet. Although the Sa-skya-pa sect lost its political supremacy in Tibet by the middle of the 14th century, the ensuing rulers considered themselves as masters over "ethnic" Tibet as a "political" unit.

### **Theocratic Period (1642-1959)**

The theocratic period of Tibetan political history began with the rise to political and religious supremacy by the V Dalai Lama and the resultant form of government endured until the occupation of Tibet by the Communist Chinese in the 20th century. The Tibetan traditional concept of "ethnic" Tibet remained generally consistent during the theocratic period; however, the extent of "political" Tibet was reduced by the loss of border regions to China.

In 1724, the province of Mdo-smad (A-mdo) was integrated into the Manchu empire as the province of Ch'ing-hai by the Yung-cheng Emperor (reigned 1723-1735) following the suppression of a Mongol revolt against the Manchu throne.

In 1726, the eastern portion of Mdo-stod (Khams) was taken under Manchu rule when the Sino-Tibetan frontier was moved from Ta-chien-lu (at 102 degrees east longitude) west-



ward to the Bam Pass ( at 99 degrees east longitude ) and the area was known as province of Hsi-k'ang.<sup>14</sup> After this, "political" Tibet extended from Ladakh in the west to the upper reaches of the Yangtze River in the east ; a geographical region that remained generally constant until the overthrow of the Manchus and the fall of the Ch'ing Dynasty in 1911.

Disagreement between Tibet and China over the location of the Sino-Tibetan frontier was one of the primary factors which caused the rupture of the tripartite meeting at Simla in 1913-1914. The meeting was held to resolve various questions relating to the mutual interests of the governments of Tibet, China and Great Britain. At the meeting, Blon-chen Bshad-sgra, the plenipotentiary for Tibet, demanded that the frontier be moved back to Ta-chien-lu where it was prior to 1726, and the Chinese plenipotentiary demanded the frontier be moved further westward to Rgya-mda', a village about one hundred miles east of Lhasa itself. The Chinese demand was based upon the fact that the military expedition of 1910 under the command of Chao Erh-feng had established an outpost there for the assault on Lhasa.

Sir Arthur Henry McMahon, the British plenipotentiary, sought to resolve the disagreement by suggesting that the 1726 Sino-Tibetan frontier at the Bam Pass be retained and the area known as the Hsi-k'ang province would be called Inner Tibet and administered by the Chinese. The area west of the Pass would be called Outer Tibet and would remain autonomous. This compromise solution was acceptable to the Tibetan Government, but not to the Chinese, which refused to ratify the Simla agreement, thereby forfeiting its rights of suzerainty over Tibet as specified in the agreement itself.

The governments of Tibet and Great Britain ratified and adhered to the Simla agreement, which established and controlled trade relations between the countries of Tibet and British India as well as demarcated the frontier between those two countries by the so-called McMahon Line, which ran from the northeastern border of Bhutan eastward to Burma. Although not specifically resolved by the Simla agreement, because of the Chinese refusal to ratify the agreement, the Sino-Tibetan frontier of 1726 continued to be regarded by the Tibetans as the *de facto* boundary between their country and China.

## CONCLUSION

As stated at the beginning of this article, there are two traditions of geography in Tibet—"religious geography" and "political geography". There are several textual examples of "religious" geography, but no monographic studies by Tibetans on "political" geography. This is easier understood when it is remembered that the written language served the primary didactic purpose of transmitting Buddhist teachings and most Tibetan literature is devoted to "religious" subjects. Although there are no books on "political" geography, the Tibetans have a definite tradition of "political" areas and boundaries which reflects their historical concepts of "ethnic" and "political" Tibet. Perhaps because of the domination of subjectivism over the Tibetan intelligentsia, other types of geography—physical, economic, and topographic—did not develop because they represent an objective description of the phenomenal world.

## NOTES

1. The system of Tibetan transcription used in this article is that described in Wylie, "A Standard System of Tibetan Transcription", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 22 (1959), pp. 261-267.
2. For a detailed discussion on dkar-chag and the value of such registers, see Giuseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, Vol. 1 (Rome, 1959), p. 153-ff.
3. This dkar-chag by the V Dalai Lama was the basis for Waddell's description of the Jo-khang. See L. Austine Waddell, "The Cathedral of Lhasa" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1896).
4. A similar guide to the other major stupa in the Kathmandu valley, namely Bodhnath, goes beyond the usual limits of a dkar-chag. This guide, titled *Mchod-rtan chen-po Bya-rung kha-shor-gyi lo-rgyus thos-pas grol-ba* ("The history of the great stupa Bya-rung kha-shor [= Bodhnath], by the hearing of which one is saved") a forty-folio xylograph, which includes an historical account (lo-rgyus) of the stupa, is an anonymous work printed in a temple near the stupa itself. Although titled a "history" (lo-rgyus), it should be considered one of the dkar-chag type.
5. This valuable guide-book was translated with footnotes by Alfonsa Ferrari (1918-1954), whose work was completed and edited by Professor Luciano Petech under the title: "mK'yen brtse's Guide to the holy places of Central Tibet", *Serie Orientale Roma*, Vol. XVI (Rome, 1958) xxii, 199, and 53 photographic plates.

6. This work has been translated by Grünwedel under the title : "Der Weg Nach Shambhala", *Abhandlungen der Koniglich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*. XXIX, Band 3 (Munchen, 1915).
7. Helmut Hoffmann, *The Religions of Tibet*, (London, 1961), p. 124 ff.
8. The Tibetan section (folios 58-81) of this work have been translated with footnotes by Turrell Wylie under the title: "The Geography of Tibet according to the 'Dzam-gling-rgyas-bshad", *Serie Orientale Roma*, Vol. XXV (Rome, 1962) xxxvii, 286 and a map.
9. Turrell Wylie, "Dating the Tibetan Geography 'Dzam-gling-rgyas-bshad through its description of the western hemisphere", *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. IV-4 (1959), pp. 300-311.
10. Wylie, "The Geography of Tibet.....", p. 90.
11. Wylie, "Dating the Tibetan Geography.....", pp. 308-309.
12. F. W. Thomas, *Ancient Folk-Literature from North-Eastern Tibet*, (Berlin, 1957), pp. 1-13.
13. See, *inter alia*, Bacot-Thomas-Toussaint, *Documents de Touen-Houang Relatifs a l'Histoire du Tibet*, (Paris, 1940-1946), p. 25.
14. Wylie, "The Geography of Tibet.....", p. 182, note 618.

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DIPANKARA ATISA

## UTTARAKURU

—BUDDHA PRAKASH

According to the earliest geographical conception of the Puranas, the earth was taken to consist of four continental regions, viz Jambudvipa, Ketumala, Bhadravarsa and Uttarakuru.<sup>1</sup> Jambudvipa stood for India proper, Ketumala represented the Oxus region, as the river Svaraksu (Vaksu) flowed through it, Bhadravarsa signified the Jaxartes region, as the river Sita watered it, and Uttarakuru denoted the country beyond it. In Buddhist texts these continental regions are differently named as Jambudvipa, to the south of mount Sumeru (Sineru), Aparagodana (Aparagoyana) to its west, Puravavideha to its east, and Uttarakuru to its north.<sup>2</sup> Both these traditions agree on the fact that Uttarakuru was the name of the region to the north of India.

The name Uttarakuru or northern Kuru is used in contradistinction to Daksinakuru or southern Kuru. In the *Mahabharata* the Uttarakurus are juxtaposed with the Daksinakurus.<sup>3</sup> The distance between their countries can be measured by the marches of Arjuna described in the *Sabhaparvan*. After crossing the White Mountain (*Svetaparvata*), he marched through Kimpurusavarsa and reached the Manasarovara Lake, in the country of the Hatakas, dominated by the Gandharvas.<sup>4</sup> From there he entered into the region called Harivarsa, beyond which lay the land of the Uttarakurus. Elsewhere in the epic, the region to the north of India, corresponding to Svetaparvata and Kimpurusavarsa, is called Haimavata, and the site of the Manasarovara Lake is indicated by the mountain Hemakuta, beyond which is said to lie Harivarsa.<sup>5</sup> The Kailasa Range, running parallel to the Ladakh Range, 50 miles behind it, is, thus, the dividing line between Haimavata and Harivarsa. According to Bana, Arjuna reached the Hemakuta mountain, whose caves were echoing with the twangs of the bows of the irritated Gandharvas, after traversing the territory of China.<sup>6</sup> Here the use of the word China seems to be intended to denote the Mongoloid peoples of the Himalayan regions, also called *Kirata*, a word derived from *Kiranti* or *Kirati*, the name of a group of people in eastern Nepal.<sup>7</sup> Beyond Harivarsa, including the territories of Tibet, lay the idyllic and utopian land of the Kurus, called Uttarakuru. This was the land of mystery

and solitude, where nothing familiar could be seen,<sup>8</sup> and it was useless to wage war.<sup>9</sup> According to a tradition, the head of the demon Mahisa, severed by Skanda, formed a huge mountain, that blocked the entry into the Uttarakuru country.<sup>10</sup> Yet Arjuna is said to have reached its frontier and conquered the northern Kurus living there.<sup>11</sup> The result of this campaign was that the people of the mountainous regions presented themselves with the offerings of garlands of jade, characteristic of Uttarakuru, and the powerful herbs of the Trans-Kailasa territory at the Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhisthira.<sup>12</sup>

It is clear from the above account of the location of Uttarakuru that it lay to the north of the Himalayas, possibly, beyond Tibet, in the vicinity of the mountain Meru,<sup>13</sup> which seems to represent the Pamirs, as shown by Sylvain Levi.<sup>14</sup> According to the Great Epic, this land was marked by idyllic pleasure, bucolic beauty and sylvan silence. The trees produced elegant fruits and flowers; the earth yielded gold and rubies; the seasons were agreeable; the people were healthy and cheerful and had a life-span of 11,000 years; they passed their time in song, dance and merrymaking and among them sexual relations were promiscuous and unbridled. It was a veritable land of gods (*devaloka*). There the righteous people were born to enjoy the fruits of their meritorious deeds. In particular, the warriors, losing their life on the battle field, were transferred to that region.<sup>15</sup> Even those, who made gifts of houses to Brahmanas, were entitled to be born in that country.<sup>16</sup> These data show that Uttarakuru cannot be the bleak mountainous country of the Himalayas, but the region to the north of it, watered by the Tarim and its tributaries, where the oases-states of Bharuka, Kuca, Karashahr and Turfan, on the northern route, and Khotan, Niya, Endere, Calmadana, Kroraina, Charklik and Miran, on the southern route, flourished in ancient times. Chinese travellers and pilgrims have testified to the prosperity and richness of these regions and the religiosity and righteousness of their people and Indian writers have described their luxury, affluence, wealth and bliss by the terms Manikan-canavarsa, Bhadrasvavarsa, Gandharvaloka and Aparagodana.

The names Kuru and Uttarakuru came into vogue in the Brahmana period. It is significant that the word "Kuru" is conspicuous by absence in the earliest strata of the *Rgveda*. Only once in the tenth mandala there is a reference to Kurusravana Trasadasyava, but he is called the king of the Purus.<sup>17</sup> Even in the territory of the Drasadvati, Sarasvati and Apaya, later known

as Kuruksetra on account of the association of the Kurus, the Baharata kings are said to have kindled the sacred fires.<sup>18</sup> In the Apri hymns Sarasvati is mentioned with Bharati, the glory of the Bharatas. In the *Vajasneyi Samhita* the Bharatas appear in place of the Kurus-Pancalas.<sup>19</sup> But in the Brahmana texts the Kurus become very prominent and are usually associated with the Pancalas.<sup>20</sup> They are also said to be in occupation of the territory, through which the rivers Drsadvati, Sarasvati and Apaya flowed, and which, consequently, came to be known as Kuruksetra.<sup>21</sup> It was the home of later vedic culture : its speech was best and purest and its mode of sacrifice was ideal and perfect.<sup>22</sup>

Besides the Kurus, there are references to the Uttarakurus in Brahmana literature. In the *Aitareya Brahmana* ( VIII, 14 ), it is stated that the people, living beyond the snowy regions, like the Uttarakurus, anoint their kings for *Vairajya*, who, as result, are called *Virats*. At another place, in the same text ( VIII, 23 ), Vasistha Satyahavya is stated to have anointed Janamtapi Atyarati, according to the ritual of Aindra Mahabhiseka, who, in consequence, went over the whole earth and conquered it upto the oceans. Thereupon, Vasistha Satyahavya demanded his fees. Atyarati replied that when he would coquer the Uttarakurus, he would confer the whole empire on him and himself become the commander of his army. Satyahavya retorted that the country of the Uttarakurus was the land of gods, whom no body could conquer, and, since he had deceived him, he would snatch everything from him. As a result, Atyarati lost his prowess and Susminson of Saibya, killed him.

It is clear from the above data that the Kurus came into the limelight in the later vedic period. They migrated from their homeland to the north of the Himalayas, and entered into India, driving away the Bharatas and occupying their habitat between the Drsadvati and the Sarasvati. Gradually, the Purus and the Bharatas mixed with them and became one people, as is clear from the expression *Kuravo Nama Bharatah* occuring in the Mahabharata ( XII, 349, 44 ). In the beginning their relations with the Pancalas were good, but, in course of time, differences appeared among them and culminated in the famous *Mahabharata* war.<sup>23</sup> Though settled in the fertile and prosperous country of the Sarasvati and the Yamuna, they preserved the memories of their idyllic home in the northern regions and treated it as the abode of gods. Another section of the Kurus reached Iran and Western Asia and penetrated into Anatolia. Traces of the

*volkerwanderung* of the Kurus in these regions are found in a series of place-names and personal names current there. A town in Sogdiana still bears the name Kurkath; two kings of the Parsuwas Ansan branch of the Achaemenian family of Iran were named Kuru; a river in Transcaucasia, to the north-west of Panzis, is called Kur (Cyrus of Hellenic geographers); the region round the confluence between the river Hermus and its right bank tributary, the Phrygius, just to the north of the city of "Magnesia-under-Sipylos" is known as Koroupedion, meaning the Kuru Plain or Kuruksetra, which, like its Indian namesake, was the scene of memorable wars, like those between Seleucos Nicator and Lysimachus in 281 B.C. and the Romans and Antiochus III in 190 B.C., which decided the fate of empires in that region.<sup>24</sup> Thus, it appears that a wing of the Kurus left their homeland for the west, swept through the corridor between the southern foot of the Elburz Range and the northern edge of the Central Desert of Iran and reached the pasture-lands in the basin of Lake Urmiah and, beyond that, in the steppe country in the lower basin of the rivers Aras and Kur, adjoining the west coast of the Caspian Sea. From there they travelled on still farther westward over the watershed between the basins of the Aras and the Qyzyl Irmağ (Halys) and debouched into the Anatolian Peninsula to settle in the region called the Kuru Plain after their name. Another detachment of the Kurus found its way to Luristan and joined the Early Achaemenids; whilst a third one swung to the southeast and through Bactriana and the Hindu-Kush moved into the Panjab and occupied the Sarasvati-Yamuna region. It is significant that one section of the Kurus, called Pratipeyas, are known as Balhikas, since one of the sons of Pratipa was called Balhika.<sup>25</sup> According to the Ramavana, Pururavas Aila, the progenitor of the Ailas, with whom the Kurus were associated, migrated to the middle country from Balhi or Bactriana.<sup>26</sup> Thus, we observe that, starting from their northern homeland (Uttarakuru), the Kurus moved to the west, and, breaking into several branches, migrated upto Anatolia, Luristan and the Panjab. As I have shown elsewhere, the painted grey ware, which succeeded the ochre-coloured ware, at more than fifty sites in U.P. and the Panjab, and may be dated 1200-1100 B.C., was associated with the Kurus.<sup>27</sup> We may, thus, date the *volkerwanderung* of the Kurus about the middle of the second millenium B.C. or a bit later.



The *Mahabharata* connects India with the land of Uttarakuru through Himalayan regions rather than the north-western passes. As shown above, Arjuna is said to have gone there *via* Kimpurusavarsa, Gandharvaloka, Haimavata, Hemakuta and Harivarsa, corresponding to different Himalayan regions. From early times the people of the Indian plains have been in contact with the Kailas region through many routes. Some of them are :

- (1) from Almora *via* Askot, Khela, Garbyang, Lipu Lekh Pass (16,750 ft.) & Taklakat to Kailas (Tarchhen) 238 miles,
- (2) from Almora *via* Askot, Khela, Darma Pass (18,510), and Gyanima Mandi 227 miles,
- (3) from Almora *via* Bageshvar, Milam, Unta-Dhura Pass (17,590), Jyanti Pass (18,500), Kungri-Bingri Pass (18,300) and Gyanima Mandi-210 miles,
- (4) from Joshimatha *via* Gunla-Niti Pass (16,600), Nabra Mandi, Sibchilim Mandi and Gyanima Mandi-200 miles,
- (5) from Joshimatha *via* Damjan Niti Pass (16,200), Tonjan La (16,350), Sibchilim Mandi and Gyanima Mandi-160 miles,
- (6) from Joshimatha *via* Hoti-Niti Pass (16,390), Sibchilim Mandi and Gyanima Mandi-158 miles,
- (7) from Badrinath *via* Mana Pass (18,400), Thuling Matha, Dapa, Nabra, Sibchilim and Gyanima Mandi-238 miles,
- (8) from Mukhuva-Gangotri *via* Nilang, Jelukhaga Pass (17,490), Puling Mandi, Thuling, Dapa, Sibchilim and Gyanima Mandi-243 miles,
- (9) from Simla *via* Rampur, Shipki Pass (15,400), Shiring La (16,400), Loache La (18,510), Gartok (15,100), Chargot La (16,200), and Tirthapuri-445 miles,
- (10) from Simla *via* Rampur, Shipki Pass, Shiring La, Thuling, Dapa, Sibchilim, and Gyanima Mandi-473 miles,
- (11) from Srinagar (Kashmir) *via* Zojila (11,578), Nammik (13,000), Fotu La (13,446), Leh (Ladhakh), Taglang La (17,500), Damchok, Gargunsa, Gartok, Chargot La (16,200) and Tirthapuri-605 miles,
- (12) from Kathmandu (Nepal, Pasupatinath) *via* Muktinath, Khocharnath and Taklakot-525 miles,
- (13) from Kullu in Kangra District through Rampur Bashahr state *via* Thuling.

In the east there were routes connecting Assam with Tibet and China. One route passed through Yung-tch'ang and Wanting and corresponds to the Burma Road. Another route led from Szechuan to Lhasa and Assam. Often pilgrims used to bypass Tibet in the south by following the Tasng-Po route. The twenty Chinese monks, who, according to I-Tsing, arrived in India during the reign of Srigupta, who constructed for them a temple called Chinese Temple (Chih-na-ssu), 40 Yojanas to the east of the famous Mahabodhi Temple at Nalanda, came by one of these routes. Chinese bamboos and silks reached India along these routes, whence they

were carried to Bactriana before the journey of Chang-K'ien in the second century B.C. Later, the Chinese adventurer Wang-hsuan-Tsche advanced along one of these routes to capture Kanauj after the demise of Harsa and the usurpation of Arjuna or Arunasva in the seventh century. According to the *Mahabharata* (III, 177, 11-13) the Pandava brothers advanced north of Badri and, scaling the Himalayas, probably *via* Mana Pass, Thuling Math, Dapa, Nabra, Sibchilim and Gyanima Mandi, and passing through the lands of the Chinas, Tusaras, Daradas, Kulindas etc reached the kingdom of the Kirata king Subahu. It is noteworthy that in subsequent Indian traditions, embodied in the Great Epic, the routes leading to Uttarakuru are said to pass through the Himalayas rather than the passes of the Hindu-Kush and the Pamirs. It appears that either there was an infiltration of people from Uttarakuru to Kurukshetra along the Himalayan routes, besides the immigration of these peoples from Bactrian quaters along the north-western passes, or, after the settlement of the Kurus in India, the tradition of their coming from the north-west was forgotten and a connection between their Indian abode and their *urheimat* beyond the Himalayas was established through Himalayan routes, that were regularly in use.

#### NOTES

1. *Mahabharata* VI, 7, 11  
 भद्राश्वः केतुमालश्च जम्बूद्वीपश्च भारत ।  
 उत्तराश्वैव कुरवः कृतपुण्यप्रतिश्रयाः ।
2. *Papancasudani*, I p. 434; *Dhammapada-atthakatha*, p. 482;  
 G. P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, Vol. II p. 236.
3. *Mahabharata*, I, 102, 10.  
 उत्तरेः कुरुभिः साधं दक्षिणाः कुरवस्तथा ।
4. *Ibid*, II, 25, 5.  
 सरो मानसमासाद्य हाटकानभितः प्रभुः ।  
 गन्धर्वरक्षितं देशं व्यजयत्पाण्डवस्ततः ॥
5. *Ibid* VI, 7, 6.  
 इदं तु भारतं वर्षं ततो हैमवतं परम् ।  
 हेमकूटात्परं चैव हरिवर्षं प्रचक्षते ॥

6. Bana. *Harsacarita*, ed P. V. Kane, p.  
पाण्डवः सव्यसाची चीनविषयमतिक्रम्य राजसूयसम्पदे क्रुध्यद्वगन्धर्व-  
धनुष्कोटिटङ्कारकूजितकुञ्जं हेमकूटपर्वतं पराजैष्ट ।
7. Suniti Kumar Chatterji. 'Kirata-Jana-Krti', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (Letters)*, Vol. XVI (1953) p. 169.
8. *Mahabharata* II, 25, 12.  
प्रविष्टश्चापि कौन्तेय नेह द्रक्ष्यसि किञ्चन ।  
न हि मानुषदेहेन शक्यमन्नाभिवीक्षितुम् ॥
9. *Ibid* II, 25 11.  
उत्तराः कुरवो ह्येते नाम युद्धं प्रवर्तते ।
10. *Ibid* III, 231, 14612.  
पतता शिरसा तेन द्वारं षोडशयोजनम् ।  
पर्वताभेन पिहितं तदगम्यं ततोऽभवत् ॥  
उत्तराः कुरवस्तेन गच्छन्त्यध यथासुखम् ।
11. *Ibid* V, 22, 8.  
दिशं ह्युदीचीमपि चोत्तरान्कुरुन् गाण्डीवधन्वैकरथोजिगाय ।
12. *Ibid* II 48, 6.  
उत्तरेभ्यः कुरुभ्यश्चाप्यपोढं माल्यमम्बुभिः ।  
उत्तरादपि कैलासादोषधीः सुमहाबलाः ॥  
पार्वतीया बलिं चान्यमाहृत्य प्रणताः स्थिताः ।
13. *Ibid* VI, 8, 23.  
मेरुप्रदक्षिणं कृत्वा संप्रयात्युत्तरान्कुरुन् ।  
*Ibid* VI, 8, 2.  
दक्षिणेन तु नीलस्य मेरोः पार्श्वे तथोत्तरं ।  
उत्तराः कुरवो राजन्पुण्याः सिद्धनिषेविताः ।
14. *Buddha Prakash, India and the World*, p. 226
15. *Mahabharata* XI, 26, 17  
ये तल्ल निहता राजन्नन्तरायोधनं प्रति ।  
यथाकथंचित्ते राजन्संप्राप्ता उत्तरान्कुरुन् ।
16. *Ibid* XIII, 57, 2958

17. *Rgveda* X, 33, 4.
18. *Rgveda* III, 23.
19. *Vajasaneyi Samhita*, XI, 3, 3.
20. *Jaiminiya Upanisad Brahmana* III, 7, 6; VIII, 7; *Kausitaki Upanisad* IV, I; *Gopatha Brahmana* I, 2, 9; *Kathaka Samhita* X, 6.
21. *Pancavimsa Brahmana* XXV, 10; *Satapatha Brahmana* IV, 1, 5, 13; *Aitareya Brahmana* VII, 30; *Jaiminiya Brahmana* III, 126.
22. *Satapatha Brahmana* III, 2, 3, 15; *Sankhayana Srautasutra* XV, 3, 15; *Latyayana Srautasutra* VIII, 11, 18.
23. Buddha Prakash, *Political and Social Movements in Ancient Panjab* pp. 128-131.
24. K. J. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte*, Vol IV Part II pp. 458-71.
25. *Mahabharata* II, 63, 2112.
26. *Ramayana* VII, 90, 21-23.
27. Buddha Prakash, *Political and Social Movements in Ancient Panjab* p. 23.

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## Notes & Topics

### UTTARAKURU IN TIBETAN TRADITION

The world in Tibetan written and oral tradition is composed of four continents on four sides of Mount Ri-rab. (རི་རབ་ Skt सुमेरु): Sar Lu-phag (གསལ་ལུ་ཕག་པག་པག་ Skt पूर्वविदेह) in the east, Dzam-ling (འཛམ་གླིང་ Skt जम्बुद्वीप) in the south, Ba-lang-chyo (བ་ལང་ཇུ་ཡོ་ Skt गोघान्य) in the west and Jhang-damnen (ཇམ་གླང་ཏམ་ཏམ་ Skt उत्तरकुरु) in the north.

It is not possible, in the present state of our knowledge at least, to construct any satisfactory geography out of the available data about these continents. Besides Dzam-ling (Jamvu-dvipa), which was a firm geographical reality, the other three continents were, if not altogether fabulous lands, largely *terra incognita*. All information from Kanjur, Tanjur, other literary texts and oral traditions may be fitted *par excellence* into what Turrell Wylie designates "Religious Geography" (supra p. 17).

Ri-rab (Sumeru) for instance is a concept more useful and necessary for rituals and meditations than for travel, trade or even pilgrimage in physical sense. For location of this traditional focal point of the universe a modern enquirer has to trace a line stretching from Mount Kailas in the east to Pamirs in the west. From the data in Chinese Buddhist cosmography, obviously built on Indian Buddhist tradition, Needham firmly identifies Mount Sumeru with the Kun Lun Mountains (*Science and Civilisation in China*, Vol. III, Cambridge 1959, pp. 565-568).

For location of Jhang-damnen (Uttarakuru) we have a few premises to start with. It was on the north of Ri-rab (Sumeru), that is, far north of Dzam-ling (Jamvu-dvipa). Dzam-ling in Tibetan tradition included India as well as Tibet. Therefore Jhang-damnen (Uttarakuru) was on the north of Tibet as well.

Now if the Kun-luns be the Mount Sumeru there can be no objection to locating Uttarakuru (Jhang-damini) in the Tarim basin as Buddha Prakash suggests (supra p. 28).

The picture of Uttarakuru drawn from Sanskrit literature tallies broadly with that of Jhang-damini in Tibetan literature. In both, this is a paradise on earth: a weird land with a bracing climate and a kind soil; a people with promiscuous morals and high longevity. In comparison with the cold and desolate plains in the south (Jhang-thang) and the sandy waste (Samo) in the north (Gobi) the Tarim valley with its oasis townships and wandering lakes was indeed a paradise. According to Buddha Prakash the emigration of the Kurus from their northern home began in the middle of second millennium B. C. It is a well-known fact that even in historical times the contour and soil of Eastern Turkestan have changed considerably. There was more of water and less of sands in prehistoric and proto-historic times. It is not unlikely that the inroads of sandy waste began in the second millennium B. C. only and led to dispersal of the Kurus. Even with the present conditions Tarim valley is a rich land surrounded by less fortunate ones. Its crops include barley, wheat, rice and cotton. The fruits which appear at all tables are melons, apples, pears, apricots, peaches, nectarines, pomegranates, plums, cherries and mulberries.\* Mineral wealth is not inconsiderable. The items which concern us here are jade-stone and gold from the Kunlun range. Garlands of jade and gold came from Uttarakuru to the court of Yudhisthira (supra p 28). Tarim valley was the meeting ground of races and cultures, commodities and concepts. Perhaps all this accounted for diverse morals and lax morals.

The Tibetan tradition adds a curious piece of information about the Uttarakuru people, viz., that this people possessed an unpleasant speech or coarse voice. Otherwise the Sanskrit tradition about Uttarakuru, the Tibetan tradition about Jhang-damini and modern travel accounts about Tarim valley (e.g. Menon: *Delhi-Chungking*, Oxford 1947) agree in describing the people concerned as strong and sturdy, gay and pleasure loving.

From the Chos-Jung (མ་ལོ་གཏམ་ = history of the religion) two important facts about Jhang-damini (Uttarakuru) have come down to us. (i) One of the Sixteen Arhats, Vakula, settled down in Jhang-damini to uphold the Sacred Doctrine there. (ii) People of Jhang-damini could become Buddhists

but were debarred from entry into monastic discipline. This second point is no doubt of great interest.

In view of their promiscuous morals people of Jhang-daminen have been all through considered to be unfit for ordination. They were in fact branded to be as unfit as the hermaphrodites, on the authority of Vasubandhu. བ་མ་མ་རྗེ་དྲ་ལྷ་མི་རྒྱུན། མཚན་གཉིས་མ་གཏོགས་མི་རྒྱལ་ལ། ལྷ་མི་ན་ལྷ་མ་པའང་དེ་བཞིན་ན། (Tanjur, Mnon, Ku)

Presiding officers and abbots of Tibetan monasteries were rather meticulous in implementing this ban. Enquiries about a monk candidate's qualifications and antecedents contained a specific question as to whether he was a native of Jhang-daminen. An instance may be cited from Sakya Lama Phag-pa (1235-1280). A great proselytizer though he was, Phag-pa in his Instructions for Ordination laid down this specific question: Are you or are you not from Jhang-daminen? ལྷ་མི་རྒྱུན་པ་མ་ཡིན་ནམ། (Sakya Kabum Vol. 15. This reference has been traced for me by my pupil Mynak Tulku Jamyang Kunga). It is evident that, though today few Tibetan scholars and monks can make any guess about its location, from about 815 A.D. (when *Abhidharmakosa* was translated into Tibetan) till about 1280 A.D. (when Phag-pa died) Jhang-daminen was a reality, a part of this phenomenal world and not a mythical land.

It is however a riddle why people of Tarim valley or its neighbourhood came to suffer from such disability at the hands of Tibetan Lamas. One is tempted to add to this the fact that a Tun-huang document entitled The Religious Annals of the Li-Country even indicates Uttarakuru in the direction of Tarim valley somewhere in the Eastern Turkestan (Thomas: *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents*, Part 1, London 1935, page 318, fn 11).

It is to be noted that the Eastern Turkestan was a famous Buddhist country long before Tibet became Buddhist. This land not only nursed and nourished Buddhism but was instrumental in its passage to China. Much of the Tantric practices—which characterize Tibetan Buddhism—was earlier in prevalence in the Eastern Turkestan. Yet ironically enough the natives of the land which had produced Dharmanandi, Dharmaraksa, Kumara-bodhi and Kumarajiva were refused ordination in Tibet later.

It is also a fact that Buddhism began its decline in the Eastern Turkestan from about 800 A.D. and by the time of

Phag-pa in Tibet (1235-1280) it had become an insignificant element in the Tarim valley. Even the community of Indian merchants (? Sartha/सार्थ = Sart) settled there embraced Islam and became the elite of the new Musulman population.

It is not unlikely that the Mongol tradition may preserve useful data for drawing a clearer picture of Jhang-daminen. The Tibetan tradition developed out of Indian Buddhist tradition and obstinately adhered to the ban for entry into monastic discipline in respect of natives of Jhang-daminen. It is to be noted that Mongolia, a country on the north of Tibet, did not suffer from such disability. The Mongol recruits to Tibetan monasteries (first Sakyapa and then Gelugpa) were esteemed agents for propagation of the Mahayana in a land where Shamanism, Christianity and Islam counted their priests also and where eclecticism was a characteristic feature of the people's life. This *Bulletin* expects to publish in a later issue findings of eminent Mongol scholars on Mongol tradition about Jhang-daminen.

The Classical writers (of the West) referred to a people called Attakorae or Ottokorus. Some scholars identify Attakorae with the Uttarakuru and locate them in Turkestan, preferably the Eastern Turkestan. This would place the habitat of the Uttarakuru on the north of Mount Meru. But the attempt to identify the Hyperboreans with the Uttarakuru has to encounter the theory of Tomaschek as developed by Hudson. This theory places the Hyperboreans in the neighbourhood of what is today Peking (Hudson: *Europe and China*, London 1931, ch. 1). Peking is in the direction of Sar Lu Phag or Purvavideha of Buddhist tradition. Jhang-daminen or Uttarakuru has to be found somewhere on the north both of India and Tibet.

NIRMAL C. SINHA

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